

Voices of Conflict: Students' and Lecturers' Perceptions of the Utility of the Bridging Program at University

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Tertiary institutions in Zimbabwe face the daunting challenge of increased need for university education by students. In response to the challenge, universities in Zimbabwe embark on strategies that increase accessibility to university education by disadvantaged students. One way through which the Zimbabwean universities are addressing the challenge is the BP (Bridging Program). This paper evaluates the BP at a Zimbabwean university by exploring the perceptions and experiences of students who have entered the university through bridging, those who entered through direct entry, as well as those of the lecturers who teach them. The study explored their perceptions and experiences by means of qualitative direct interviews with both students and lecturers and also through a questionnaire to the students. The results indicated a noble purpose of the program, however, voices of conflict between students and lecturers, students and students, and lecturers and lecturers on the intellectual and social frames of the program. The paper made several recommendations, the key of which is the need to: keep the BP as a stopgap measure, finically support the BP and achieve institutional change to remove stigma attached to bridging, and also remove gender discrimination.

Keywords: BP (Bridging Program), functional frame, intellectual frame, social frame, stigma, gender discrimination

Introduction

In his assessment of the state of higher education in Africa, Coombe (1991) pointed out the continued centrality of university education. He noted that universities remain great national storehouses of trained, informed, inquiring and critical intellects and the indispensable means of replenishing national talent. Coombe (1991) further reiterated that in this endeavor, the universities have no substitutes. Universities are critical in the development of any nation and remain engines for economic growth. This could be the reason why, when Zimbabwe gained its independence in 1980, one of its key areas of focus was expansion of university education, as the country moved from an elite to a mass education system. At independence time, there was only one university in the country, but today there are more than a dozen universities in the country. However, as Kariwo (2007) pointed out, even with this increase in the number of universities in the country, "It is estimated that Zimbabwe has an excess of some 8,000 students annually who qualify but fail to enter universities" (Kariwo, 2007, p. 8). Depending on the program, the minimum entry requirement for the universities is five ordinary level passes including English and at least advanced level passes in two subjects. A pass at advanced level is at least two E grades.

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Unlike countries like Nigeria, Austria, Switzerland and Belgium (Retrieved from http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/University_and_College) where student admission into university is administered by a centralized unit, Zimbabwe does not have a centralized system for student admissions to undergraduate. In Zimbabwe, students are not only admitted into university as a whole, but also a particular field of study. As the demand for education continues to rise, admission into a university is highly competitive. In most cases, though the government regulations stipulate a minimum of two points, higher points give an admission advantage, and due to competition some departments demand a minimum of 14 or 15 points. In such case, two points are considered just as fail. In Zimbabwe, then, it ends up not just being a case of holding advanced level results, but a satisfactory performance in it is pre-requisite. Academic departments in Zimbabwean universities are known for demanding high points. Lowering of entry points has been practiced to increase enrolments and, sometimes, to deliberately optimize a disadvantaged sex group, but this has attracted condemnation from critics (Bunyi, 2003). The critics have cited that universities are meritocratic institutions and, therefore, allowing some students to enter with lower points than others, not only dilutes standards but endorses the notion of those whose points have been lowered as intellectually weaker. Kariwo (2007, p. 11), on this aspect, hammers home called as “maintaining fitness or purpose by the universities”. However, supporters of this intervention counter argued that those who entered the universities through this route, first and foremost qualify to enter before they are considered under the scheme, it is only due to shortage of places that they would otherwise be locked out.

However, even after lowering of points, it is realized that very few candidates enter subjects that require a strong science-mathematics-technology background, yet, there is an increasing need for university education in these departments. In these cases, the BP has been found a viable alternative by most state universities in Zimbabwe. While the BP has been implemented at the MSU (Midlands State University), in Zimbabwe, for sometime now, there is limited information regarding students and lecturers' perceptions of the program. Against this background, this study examined perceptions and experiences of students and lecturers of the BP (Bridging Program), for the study feels that their perceptions and experiences are important for the success of the program.

Literature Review

What Is the BP?

The BP is a strategy that focuses on providing pre-degree assistance to students who are educationally disadvantaged, whether male or female. The goal of the BP is to sequentially bridge the gap between the initial skills of an individual and what the individual needs to enter and succeed in university education (Woollacott & Henning, 2004). This study made one of its aims establish how well the students and lecturers find the program “bridging the gap”. Because of this goal, the BP is, sometimes, called “an enabling course”, because it is supplementary education specifically designed to offer transition services that assist a student who is not otherwise eligible for admission to university (Retrieved from <http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bridge-Program>). Through the BP, the student will attain initial educational level that enables him/her to attend a course and achieve a terminal degree. Nair (2002) in works on “Remedying for Educational Wastage in Educational Training” found most higher education institutions almost the world over, employing BP as an alternative for students who failed to meet tertiary entrance requirements. The BP is provided for particular types of disadvantaged students who need preparation prior to commencing a formal award course. The BP is, thus, in fact, educational support through extra tuition, as it addresses the student's articulation gap between

secondary and tertiary education through compensating for the student's under preparedness by providing the student with additional educational support in preparation for mainstream studies.

Bunyi (2003) reported the successful story of the BP when citing the story of 2002/2003 science and technical intake at Jomo Kenyatta University (Kenya) where none of the 462 female students who entered public university through lowering of points entered courses, such as medicine, surgery, dental, etc.. Masanja (2001), reporting about the university of Dar es Salam's enrolment statistics of 1997 to 2000 and concurring with Bunyi (2003), noted that the BP seems not to attract as much controversy as lowering of points.

Theoretical Perspective

The focus of this study was on gauging the students and lecturers' conceptions, perceptions and experiences of the BP at MSU. The theoretical framework that guided and directed this study is the SIT (Symbolic Interactionism Theory), as it is outlined in Ballantine (1997). The founder of this theory is George Herbert Mead and the theory's stance is that social behavior cannot be understood in the same way as natural scientists understand the behavior of physical events (Ballantine, 1997).

According to Ballantine (1997), this theory emphasizes that raw behavior of human beings in a set up can only be understood within its social context, justifying in here the adoption of the qualitative research paradigm. This study mainly borrowing from the theory as echoed by Ballantine (1997) is on how the studied members acquired, interacted and interpreted a set of meanings, rules and norms that they attach to their experiences of the BP. From this, the study asked questions to understand how the respondents defined and conceptualized the BP. In assessing the students and lecturers' conceptions and meanings of the BP, this study paid attention to whether it was one strong voice or there were conflicting and contradictory streams of thought in the shared meanings. The voices of conflict were investigated among students themselves, i.e., those who enrolled through bridging and those who entered university through direct entry. Voices of conflict were also investigated between lecturers and students' perceptions and experiences.

Ideas that also guided this study were borrowed from Melrose's (1996) views on evaluating a curriculum program. According to Melrose (1996), curriculum program evaluation involves making critical assessments about the effectiveness, value or appropriateness of the curriculum program. One way of making the critical assessment of a curriculum program is examining students and teachers' experiences. According to this, one of the aims of this study was to assess the students and lecturers' perceptions of the value and worthiness of the BP. The examination of the students and lecturers' perceptions and subjective experiences of the BP is of particular importance in this study, because it gives clues to successes and/or failures of the BP. Borrowing directly from this, this study adopted a qualitative focus which is consistent with the intention to explore subjective feelings and experiences of the BP. Again in making this examination, attention was paid to whether any divide existed between students who entered through direct entry and those who entered university through bridging, and between students and lecturers.

Research Methodology

Research Design

Borg and Gall (1996) asserted that the worthy of any study lies in the research design. The two went further to explain a research design as the entire approach or all the procedures elected by a researcher to answer a particular set of questions. Because of the intention to explore the students and lecturers' subjective perceptions and experiences of the BP, this study adopted a qualitative focus. The students and lecturers'

subjective perceptions and experiences build their subjective meanings of the BP. Crotty (1998; as cited in Dzimir, 2004) noted that qualitative methods can ascertain what those meanings are. The view of a qualitative study adopted by study is given by Neuman (2003) who defined a qualitative approach as a holistic inquiry into a phenomenon that is examined within its natural setting. According to Merriam (1998), this study's interest lay in understanding meanings from the participants' views with the intention of inductively building rather than testing concepts.

Study Population

The study targeted a cohort of students doing level 2.2 (i.e., completing their second year) at MSU during September to November, 2010, and the lecturers who taught them. The cohort comprised students who entered the university through direct entry and those who entered through bridging. The level 2.2 rather than first year students were chosen, because the researcher felt that these had ample time in the mainstream study, so had a wider experience with lecturers that enabled them to give their valuable insights into the efficacy of the BP and also not far away from their starting point to forget their experiences during the bridging period (in the case of those who had entered university through bridging). Lecturers considered for the study were only those who taught such a cohort of students in different subject departments in the university.

Study Sample

Stratified sampling was employed to come up with participants who represented a cross-section of the population. Students and lecturers were stratified according to their faculties and then subject areas. After stratifying students and lecturers, possible equal numbers of males and females were randomly selected. A total of 30 students (15 entered through bridging and 15 entered through direct entry) and eight lecturers were selected. Of the 30 students, six were from the faculty of hard sciences, six from Faculty of Natural Resources, six from Faculty of Social Sciences and 12 from the Faculty of Commerce. Of the eight lecturers, two were from the identified faculties.

Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

All the 30 students filled in the questionnaires. There were two sets of questionnaires—one for those who had entered through bridging and the other for those who entered through direct entry. From the 30 students, formal semi-structured interviews were held with 16 of them in form of four focus group discussions (two with each set of students). Through the use of focus group interviews, students as a group of interviewees being similar were allowed to talk about whatever they considered important to the topic. Focus group interviews have been shown to facilitate greater openness as opposed to the one-to-one interviews (Neuman, 2003). Data collected using these discussions were very valuable in providing insights into shared experiences and revealed details and intricacies that this researcher believed may not have been readily available from the individual interviews. Through use of this instrument, there was sparking of views on the BP which, in particular, enabled capturing of students' ideas, feelings, opinions and suggestions. By doing so, rich data were generated in a way that validated the study (Creswell, 2005).

Face-to-face and one-on-one interviews were held with the eight lecturers who taught the students that entered university through bridging and those who entered through direct entry together. The interviews consisted of both closed and open-ended questions in order to gather the lecturer's facts and opinions about the BP.

Through the interview with both students and lecturers, this study was able to acquire supplementary information from the respondents through the respondents' incidental comments, body languages and tones of voice.

These gestures gave clues to the participants' attitudes, feelings, achievements and limitations of the BP at MSU.

Data Analysis and Reporting Plan

The data collected were analyzed qualitatively according to what Creswell (2005, p. 231) called a "bottom up approach ... (that) consists of developing a general sense of the data, and then coding descriptions and themes about the central phenomenon".

Research Findings and Discussion

The collected data constituted three sets of results. These were: the set of the lecturers' results; the set of results of students who entered university through bridging and the set of results from the students who entered university via direct entry. An intersectional approach was employed, where results from the three sets on same aspect of enquiry were compared and contrasted. Broadly, the three sets of data yielded results that were put into three categories depending on the dimensions of the responses. The identified dimensions from the data were functional frames, intellectual frames and social frames of the BP.

Functional Frames of the BP

Much in line with Essack and Quayle's (2007) main finding, all the three groups of participants found the BP an important avenue for students to enter into university and pursue a degree course, without which they (students) would not have entered. This was a fact confirmed by all the lecturers and all the students who had entered through the bridging and 80% of the students who entered via direct entry. The responses were all in favor of or strongly in favor of the BP. Of the three students who opposed the BP, none strongly opposed. One lecturer categorically stated that:

While it may be debatable whether the BP assists students to tackle a degree program, it is non-debatable that without the program, many students would not be in this university today. I find the BP beneficial. Demand for university education in Zimbabwe is exploding. Zimbabwe cannot afford to waste talent just because of lack of will to foster the talent.

One of the interviewed students from Computer Science Department who entered through direct entry also said, "We learn with them. In some cases, it is not because of lack of potential, but often for reasons of disadvantage". Indeed, it was the feeling of most of the students who had entered through bridging. They did not consider themselves academically inferior, much as they felt that it was an issue of being either academically under-prepared (a feeling from those who did not have much "hands on" on computers as others) or academically ill prepared as was the case with most who came from poor rural and urban backgrounds.

In a class of 10 taking computer studies, we ended up with only one working computer. I had no chance with computers, so I cannot even half compare myself with my fellow mates from Regina Mundi High School where there is a computer laboratory with functioning computers being more than the number of students. I understand that I was coming from a disadvantaged background. I tell you, with the experience I had from BP, I started my first year much better than some who were coming from school straight. (Interview bridged student)

Another interviewed bridged student had this to say, "For me, it is a stepping stone into the university without which I would not be here. I credit the program for being where I am today". Indeed, through the focus group discussions, students shared a lot on areas of individual deprivations. Some cited poverties of the schools to acquire and maintain resources, while with some, especially females from rural day schools it was an issue of social-cultural constraints, the main one being the burden of household chores. The bridged students, thus,

shared a “common advantage” of being accorded an avenue to university education and pursue a degree program—an advantage without which they would not be at university. Thus, as Essack and Quayle (2007) found out, all the groups of respondents in this study agreed that the BP was a useful program that enabled a viable and legitimate student route into university of disadvantaged students.

However, while the BP increased entry of disadvantaged groups, most students found the program benefiting more female students than male students to such an extent that 93% of the student respondents believed that the BP was a gender affirmative action program (This aspect had many negative social connotations as will be seen on the section on social dimensions of the program). The lecturers also tended to agree that the BP, though open to males and females, appeared to be skewed in favor of female students in the end. Their arguments were that, since university enrolment policy is 50:50, indisputably, more males than females enter via direct entry. The lecturers further said that most female students even after lowering of entry qualifications could still not qualify precipitating bridging to beef up the pre-requisite advanced level subjects. In the end it is mostly females who then will be bridged. In fact, one lecturer said, to begin with, they used to bridge only female students. Thus, while rhetoric frames the BP in terms of disadvantaged students, the study found out that university practice intervenes on level of gender.

The Intellectual Frames of the BP

Various views were ushered concerning the academic effectiveness of the BP. All the three sectors were of the view that, as its name suggests, the BP's mandate is to bridge the gap between high school and university education. As one lecturer rightly put it, “It is an equipping program, equipping students with skills and knowledge that lay a solid foundation for their mainstream studies” (interview lecturer).

From the lecturers' perspectives, the BP is very effective in closing the articulation gap between secondary school and university education. Of the eight lecturers, seven found the program laying threshold concepts on the students' chosen course. Only one lecturer was somehow in between concerning the effectiveness of the BP. From the lecturers' experiences, there were no notable differences in performance between the two groups of students afterwards, saying that as they enter the mainstream, it becomes difficult to pick on who came through bridging and who came via direct entry. Once in their mainstream, one can not tell who is who. Performances depend on level of devotion to study and self-directed learning (interview lecturer).

However, from the group of the bridged students, a divide existed in their responses. While two thirds of the group found the program well equipping (as they said that they felt no academic gap between them and others who entered through direct entry), the other one third were of a different view. These felt that they did not much benefit from bridging, as they found themselves relying on direct entry students on threshold concepts.

The same divide existed within the group that had entered through direct entry. Within this group, the divide was a common thread woven from the way they viewed the BP, via their views and feelings about students who had entered through bridging to the sort of recommendations they proffered. While all appreciating the noble purpose for bridging, three quarters found the program wanting in pursuit of its goal. The three quarters maintained that one can tell that so and so entered through bridging

Because when we come to higher order subject concepts, most of them lag behind. Why? Because they lack the foundation, constructions at baseline levels become constituencies at higher levels. Because they lack the constructions at the base, they encounter perpetual difficulties as we go up. (Interview student enrolled through direct entry)

Another student from this group reiterated that, “Even some of our lecturers, like Mr. X, you will hear him

say, 'If you entered through bridging, you may find this difficult' (interview student). Pockets of these students said that they were doing a lot in helping the bridged students. Some students, on this issue, blamed the one term period accorded bridging, saying that it was rather too short, while the majority of this lot blamed the problem on the "point gap". "Surely, a person with 13 points now being put at par with one with two points and say that bridging swallows the gap is rather unrealistic" (interview student).

Thus, voices of conflict existed between students and lecturers and within students themselves as regards the effectiveness of the BP.

Social Frames of the BP

Almost all the bridged students said that the BP gave them the confidence to their studies by way of familiarizing them with how the university works both socially and academically. It, thus, gave them what Bourdieu (1997) called "social capital" or "cultural capital". The view of social capital taken by this study is as perceived by Thomas (2002) who viewed social capital as being fundamental about how people interact with each other, that is "the glue which helps to move individuals from exclusion to participation". These students felt that they were prepared to acquire an understanding of university conventions, as they were encultured into a new academic culture. To these students, the social capital manifested itself in various ways. Key among these was that the BP introduced students to the experience of working in a university environment.

During the BP, I began to develop an understanding of what it means to be a student at a university, as I also observed others who were already in the mainstream. When I was now first year, I was way ahead of those from high school. (Interview bridged student)

From the lectures attended, the BP accustomed the students to the different teaching styles and introduced them to the style of self-directed learning. "Unlike in high school, learning during BP introduced me to self-directed learning styles" (interview bridged student). In this way, the BP increased students' confidence in them. Self-directed learning has been found by Henderson (2009) to cultivate self-belief in students.

Students, thus, during bridging, learnt what it was like to be a part of the university community, thus, removing a feeling of exclusion and ushering in an era of participation, a feeling of being "a part of" and a "sense of belonging" (Thomas, 2002). It completely removed the culture shock which they said those who had not done bridging during the beginning of their first year.

However, though feeling belonging to the university community, 13/15 said that belonging was mostly negative in the sense that they felt that they were being discriminated against by students in the mainstream, a feeling 6/15 felt up to the time the study was carried out. They said that they felt that others viewed them as academic failures and inferiors, a feeling some of them said even some of their lecturers held up to today.

Now, it is better that we are a part of the mainstream, and those behind us do not know how we got into university and those ahead, are only too busy trying to finish up their courses. But, when we were bridging, I particularly felt isolated from the mainstream and stigmatized from their comments and attitudes. "These are the ones who tried but failed and now are building bridges after failing to cross the river" (Interview bridged student, directly translating from its vernacular version). (Interview bridged student)

There was a lot of satire in the vernacular statement which made the bridging students feel criticized and subtly demeaned for their inadequacies. This is in agreement with what Essack and Quayle (2007) found out. The students in this study said that they felt inferior, inadequate, and different and ridiculed, and hated telling their friends, who were a part of the mainstream then, and they were bridging. "Worse still even during our first

year, Mr. Nyepai kept reminding us over and over again that we were bridged" (interview bridged student).

The bridged male students said that they did not share the same degree of disadvantage of stigmatization as with their female counterparts. These male students said that they felt the stigmatization more alluding to a gender asymmetry disadvantage. Drawing heavily from the devaluation perspective as given by England and LI (2006), extrapolating on the Zimbabwean situation, the Zimbabwean culture devalues women, and this leads to devaluation or stigmatization of all that is associated with women, even a field of study. Undisputedly, more females were bridged and the program to begin with at the university was made for females only, so males who were bridging were labeled "females", and in the Zimbabwean culture, this is the least that any men worth his salt can take. The bridged male students hence felt a removal of their male hood. The bridged male students said that it was worse when they were bridged to enter a field that is traditionally for female. The stigma of a non-traditional choice was stronger for men than women, because when men make a non-traditional choice, they are entering a devalued sphere of things associated with women (Williams, 1995). Thus, though the bridged students shared the same victim mentality and disadvantages of stigma, there was gender asymmetric in the disadvantage, making the bridged male students suffer a double jeopardy.

However, the female students also said that, in fields where only females still happen to be the bridged lot, especially in natural sciences (because of the institutional drive to have gender parity in enrolment), the BP instilled a feeling of being separate and different from the rest of the group who are mainly males. One female student said, "If we encounter difficulties with subject matter, we often hear these male students, even up to today saying, "Did you not meet this during bridging?" The female student went further to say that the impact of such comments on the social and educational experience of the victims is devastating, and in some cases, the female students escape by ceasing seeking help or even ceasing participating in lectures.

Thus, for these students, while the BP gave them confidence to their studies by familiarizing them with the university culture which the victim mentality brought about during the process of eroding the social gains. Seventy five percent of the bridged students felt socially unaccommodated during their bridging, 60% regretted the route they had taken, but the regrets were soon overcome by the realized benefits, for indeed the majority (90%) felt that they were better prepared for their degree studies, because they had completed bridging. Yet again, 75% felt that their fellow students who knew definitely that they were bridged did not well accommodate them during the bridging process.

Only two of the eight lecturers thought that there was stigmatization of the bridged students and all the lecturers said that they do not pass comments or joke in ways that demean bridged students.

The non-bridged students, almost all, agreed that there is indeed stigma attached to attending bridging and that even at the level of 2.2, they were conscious of who got in through bridging and who got in through direct entry. They (73.3%) agreed that they treated bridged students differently and 46.6% felt that they will not recommend the BP to other students, because it was just not in their interests.

Conclusions

This study acknowledged the commendable effort and the landable commitment displayed by the MSU, Zimbabwe, in addressing the increasing demand for university education in the country through the BP. However, despite of this shrill drive and noble purpose of the program, the study also noted that there exist challenges regarding the intellectual and social frames of the program. The study is, however, of the view that when these two frames are revisited with a view to revitalizing them, the BP remains one of the most viable routes through

which students, who otherwise are not eligible for admission to university, can enroll in university.

Recommendations

In view of the research findings, this article makes the following recommendations:

(1) Results established neither separate nor contradictory streams of thought between the three groups of participants as regards the functional value of the BP. In light of this finding, the study recommends that the BP be kept implemented as a stopgap measure. The program unlocks the potential of students, since it is inarguable that quite a number of Zimbabwe secondary school pupils are not exposed opportunities to optimize, even let alone to realize their potential. In this regard, the program touches and transforms the lives of these individual pupils;

(2) While the BP increases access to university education, lecturers especially thought that the government could consider assisting bridging students financially. "Potentials remain untapped, because the vast majority can not afford the fees" (interview lecturer). Bridging is not provided for free. The scenario in Zimbabwe is such that most students who attend rural day schools are from poor families, so do not score high because of a myriad of reasons surrounding their situation, chief among these being poverty. The students score lowly, and cannot access university education through direct entry. The majority of these are then forced to bridge, but bridging is not provided for free. Government assistance is given to those who are in the mainstream. Thus, university affordability may pose a barrier. This study recommends that government assistance be given to bridging students;

(3) Mixed feelings towards the BP's usefulness were registered with both students and lecturers. These are particularly important for the success of the BP, and so need to be gauged. In light of this, there is great need by the university to constantly carry out diagnostic feedback on the successes and limitations of the BP at the institution in order to ensure that the program continues to meet students' needs. There are many ways in which this can be done. The university authorities could let students and lecturers complete an evaluative questionnaire at the end of their bridging course that gauges their perceptions of the BP. Another fruitful way of doing it is holding qualitative feedback sessions with the lecturers and bridged students in focus groups. This researcher found these a useful way of gauging student perceptions. This will provide stakeholders with insights into lecturers and students' subjective perceptions and experiences of the program, including its perceived value, effectiveness and appropriateness. Students, especially, should be given a chance to engage in a process of personal reflection on their own development and challenges regarding the program;

(4) The study established stigma associated with bridging. The organization of the program at the institution was found to result in perceptions of inferiority and stigma attached to attending bridging. In line with this, the institution is encouraged to adopt an ideology that avoids practical isolation of the bridged students from the mainstream. The university needs to push for an institutional change that demonstrates change in the broader university community so that the community understands and appreciates the program and in the process the bridged students do not feel embarrassed, frightened, hurt, uncomfortable or inferior relative to those in the mainstream, because of their method of entry. The institution can achieve this through carrying intensive and extensive awareness of and sensitivity to the BP. The two terms' awareness and sensitivity are often taken to mean one thing, but in this recommendation, they are different and distinct. Borrowing from Reeves and Baden's (2000) distinction of the two words, awareness herein is a recognition of what the BP is all about, i.e., its essence and purpose. Sensitivity is a step ahead of awareness. It is the

translation of awareness into practice which results in changes in perception. It could be that the negative feelings that the mainstream students and indeed some lecturers have about bridging are a result of lack of appreciation and sensitivity to the program;

(5) The bridged male students registered that they suffered a double jeopardy: the intellectual discrimination (this they suffer together with their fellow bridged female students) and a further gender discrimination, (because bridging is considered as female domain). In view of this, the study recommends some gender sensitization of students and staff in the university to awaken them to a culture of running away from negative gender stereotypes that match males and females exclusively with certain subjects and behaviors is necessary. Gender sensitization helps uproot prejudice and stigmatization and other principles that violate fundamental ideas of fairness and justice by discriminating against innocent persons on grounds of sex.

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